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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3834
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3693
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4392
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: IS AMNESTY FOR IMPRISONED
NIYAZOV-ERA OFFICIALS IN THE WORKS?

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Embassy local staff member has learned that Seyitbay Kandimov, a Niyazov-era Deputy Chairman for Finance and Central Bank Chairman, recently had his prison sentence reduced by three years. Kandimov has been in the Owadan-Depe prison since May 2002. It was not clear when Kandimov is now scheduled to be released. The son has not been allowed to visit his father, but he can send him packages by bribing prison guards, and he gets a short handwritten note back from his father saying that he received the packages.

¶2. (C) Separately, poloff was told today by Yusup Kuliev, a filmmaker, that Berdimuhamedov plans a broad amnesty of imprisoned former officials to coincide with the 65th anniversary of Soviet Victory Day (May 9). Kuliev's oldest brother was a security official imprisoned by Niyazov in May 2002 for 18 years, charged with involvement in planning a coup. Kuliev said his family is able to send packages to his brother once a month. He also indicated that Berdimuhamedov has wanted to release such prisoners for a while, but has been prevented by a circle of close "advisors."

¶3. (C) Earlier this month, a couple of local sources mentioned that officials of the Ministry of National Security (MNB) had begun collecting biographic information about prisoners who are former government officials and were jailed on corruption charges, typically involving embezzlement. (NOTE: Turkmen refer to such cases as "political" prisoners, as opposed to "criminal" prisoners. END NOTE.) The prisoners, identity documents are held by prison authorities.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: There appears to be some government activity regarding imprisoned officials, although whether it will lead to amnesty for "political" prisoners remains to be seen. Both of the specific cases mentioned did not involve prisoners implicated in the November 2002 attack on Niyazov's motorcade, which could be a factor in showing leniency. Even recently, Turkmen officials have referred to those involved in the 2002 incident as "traitors." END COMMENT.
CURRAN